

APPENDIX D

SCORP PUBLIC WORKSHOP RESULTS

INTRODUCTION

To gather views and suggestions from the public, the Division conducted four workshops to identify actions that should be taken to address outdoor recreation issues. A secondary goal of these public meetings was to bring together diverse recreational interest groups and focus on the commonality of their goals — the allocation of natural resources and funding for outdoor recreation.

These public workshops were held across the state in Raleigh, Winston-Salem, New Bern, and Asheville. Attendance at the workshops was promoted by a 1,800 piece mailing to recreation professionals, conservation and recreation groups, university faculty, private commercial recreation providers, and federal, state, and local government officials.

Statewide press releases as well as articles and notices in different recreation, conservation, and state publications were also used to publicize the public workshops. Articles about the SCORP initiative were published in the spring 1989 edition of the *NC Recreation and Park Society Review* and the N.C. Division of Parks and Recreation newsletter.

Workshop notices appeared in the following publications: *NCRPS Review Newsletter*, June, 1989; *Tarheel Trails*, Vol. 1, No. 3; *Natural Resource and Community Development Calendar*, July, 1989; *Recreation Resource Services Jobs Bulletin*, June, 1989; and the *NCDPR Courier*, June, 1989. Public workshop notices were sent for inclusion in the following organizations' newsletters: Carolina Jaybirds; Good Sam's Club; Friends of State Parks; Audubon Society; and the Carolina Paddlers. Despite active promotion, the workshops were attended by only 56 persons. Because of the low turnout and current staffing and budgetary constraints, new workshops were not conducted for the 2003-2008 SCORP update.

MEETING FORMAT

Following a brief introduction about the wide spectrum of outdoor recreation activities and interests, a slide presentation offered an overview of outdoor recreation issues. The broad issue categories, which had been determined by a statewide survey, included inadequate funding, the need for improved park and recreation services, and the need to improve natural resource conservation.

After the slide presentation, participants divided into small groups varying in size from five to nine persons where suggestions were obtained in a nominal group process. This process enabled each participant to fully express his or her ideas.

Participants were asked to respond to the question, "Recognizing that there are diverse recreation/conservation interests, how can we work together to improve outdoor recreation services in the future?"

At the end of each nominal group meeting, individuals were asked to review the entire list of recommendations and to rank their three most important ideas. Each first place vote scored three points; each second place vote scored two points; and each third place vote scored one point.

Table D-1 includes a summary of 197 suggestions made at the four workshops. Suggestions have been grouped into five general topic areas, and arranged in descending order according to total score (column 3). The five topic areas are secure funding, effective partnerships, improve outdoor recreation services, better state parks, and conserve natural resources. The scores reflect the importance of a particular topic to meeting participants. The weights (column 4) were obtained by dividing the sum of each topic area by the total sum of all rankings.

Table D-1 also includes the number of suggestions obtained in each topic area (column 1), the percentage of total suggestions in each topic area (column 2), and points per suggestion (column 5). Points per suggestion were calculated by dividing the score for each topic area by the number of suggestions for each topic area.

ANALYSIS OF RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

Recommended actions focused on five general issues or topic areas: adequate funding; effective partnerships; improved outdoor recreation services; better state parks; and conserving natural resources.

NEED FOR ADEQUATE FUNDING

A stable, consistent source of funding was viewed as the most pressing issue. Promoting public and legislative awareness of outdoor recreation needs and benefits was seen as the first step to increase funding by meeting participants. The greatest number of recommendations in the state and local funding category were suggestions on how to raise money and facilitate its allocation from the state to local governments. Workshop participants looked to North Carolina to provide the ways and means to fund recreation services - through the establishment of a state trust fund endowed by new taxes. Since the public meetings, North Carolina established the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund. PARTF has, since its establishment in 1994, become North Carolina's leading funding source for outdoor recreation areas and facilities.

EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIPS

Perhaps in response to the workshops' discussion focus of cooperation to provide better outdoor recreation services, meeting participants deemed that effective partnerships among all recreation providers and users are necessary in a period of increasing demand and fewer resources. In order to effectively meet public demand, all recreation providers must coordinate their planning and programming efforts, "localizing" administration on a county basis by sharing facilities and not duplicating services. Local governments want clearly defined program and facility standards to be developed for use as state funding criteria and more technical advice from the state. The use of volunteers and private groups for management and operations, as well as bringing together these support groups as a constituent political action lobby for outdoor recreation, was recommended.

IMPROVE OUTDOOR RECREATION SERVICES

The highest ranking recommendation in this topic area was to encourage the dedication of more open space for recreation through tax incentives for private land owners and requiring dedicated land or cash from developers. Local governments need enabling legislation and local ordinances for these initiatives to acquire more open space for recreation. The development and/or expansion of all kinds of trails — bike, greenway, hiking, river — was also considered very important. Participants stated that planning based on trends, needs assessment, user demographics, and growth management should progress through a county, regional, and, then, statewide effort. Maintenance of deteriorating facilities and better staffing also ranked high in improving outdoor recreation services.

STATE PARKS

Many meeting participants had particular suggestions for state parks. These recommendations corresponded with the topic areas and categories made for outdoor recreation issues in general. Increased funding and promoting awareness of this need was the top ranking recommendation. Participants felt that the State Park System should improve its services by focusing on staffing, planning, and facilities. It was noted as important to: "complete the State Park System as to natural features and geographic representation"; expand the natural and scenic river system; classify state park units to determine appropriate uses; and establish interpretive facilities in the parks. "The primary role of state parks is conservation and education," stated one workshop participant. The state park system "should develop a critical issues forum to educate the public on environmental issues" and extend its interpretation/education programs for children into formal educational curricula.

CONSERVE NATURAL RESOURCES

Identification and acquisition of natural areas were determined to be the most important tasks in conserving natural resources. Meeting participants supported the stricter enforcement of resource protection from degradation and overuse. Appreciation of our natural heritage will come through environmental education of the public - children and adults - in schools, on public television and by a statewide public awareness campaign. Providing opportunities for less traditional forms of recreation in appropriate natural settings , such as bicycling or for better public access to water resources, were also considered wise use of our natural resources.

CONCLUSIONS

In the four public workshops, the meeting participants were primarily local recreation providers, conservation and recreation interest groups, citizen advisory board members, and government officials. Although small in number, these individuals had a realistic sense of what is needed to improve outdoor recreation services in North Carolina.

Local governments desired the establishment of a state trust fund for outdoor recreation, and this has been done. Participants generally acknowledged that adequate funding will occur only if the public support is heard by the legislature. As one Raleigh workshop participant stated, "Voters have impact; we need to increase awareness of the plight of parks." Developing a constituent advocacy lobby is necessary to encourage the allocation of natural resources and funding for outdoor recreation. We need to "bring together diverse recreation groups — locals, state, trails, etc. — to work together towards improved recreation services," said one New Bern participant. This will be the natural process as both the public and legislature become aware of the benefits and needs of park and recreation systems through a series of educational public service announcements to media statewide and effective environmental education efforts by state parks, public schools, and recreation providers. Cooperative planning efforts among all recreation providers - public and private - is necessary in this period of retrenchment to try to meet public demand for services.

True conservation, or wise use, of natural resources is more likely if the public is educated to appreciate our natural heritage. A Winston-Salem workshop participant stated, "We must educate government officials, children, developers, and the public about recreation needs and values." Again, funding for outdoor recreation services, better state parks, acquisition of natural areas, and for the protection of our natural resources, is contingent upon public awareness of the need and the benefits of doing so.

Good stewardship of our natural resources will ensure that each recreationist will be able to pursue his favorite outdoor activities — whether it be observing wildflowers in their natural habitat, waterskiing, or playing softball. We all have a vested interest in helping determine the quality of life in North Carolina.

Table D-1. Public Meeting Results: Topic Areas and Scoring.

	Number of Suggestion s	% of Total Suggestion s	Score: Number of Points	Weight: % of Total Points	Points Per Suggestion
I. ADEQUATE FUNDING	33	16.7	166	28.6	5
Promote Public & Legislative Awareness of Park & Recreation Needs & Benefits	9	4.5	51	8.8	5.6
Dedicated Funding Sources	17	8.6	48	8.3	2.8
Adequate Funding	5	2.5	43	7.4	8.6
Increase Federal Funding	2	1	24	4.1	12
II. EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIPS	59	29.9	138	23.8	2.3
Coordination Among Public Agencies	27	13.7	78	13.4	2.9
Volunteer Support Groups	11	5.5	21	3.6	1.9
Political Action	5	2.5	14	2.4	2.8
Public/Private Cooperation	7	3.5	13	2.2	1.9
Improved Technical Assistance to Local	9	4.5	12	2.1	1.3
III. IMPROVE OUTDOOR RECREATION	39	19.8	119	20.4	3.1
Reserve Open Space	5	2.5	34	5.9	6.8
More Trails	9	4.5	25	4.3	2.8
Improved Planning	6	3	21	3.6	3.5
Maintain Facilities	4	2	15	2.6	3.7
Adequate Staffing	4	2	10	1.7	2.5
Limit Liability	3	1.5	5	.8	1.6
Improve Access	4	2	5	.8	1.3
More Programs & Facilities	4	2	4	.7	1
IV. BETTER STATE PARKS	38	19.3	98	16.9	3.9
Funding	12	6	53	9.1	4.4
Increase Funding	9	4	44	7.6	4.9
Promote Awareness of Need & Benefits	3	1.5	9	1.5	3
Improve Services	9	4.5	21	3.6	2.3
Adequate Staffing & Facilities	6	3	11	1.9	1.8
Improve Planning	3	1.5	10	1.7	3.3
Conserve Natural Resources	9	4.5	15	2.6	1.7
Acquire Natural Areas	3	1.5	7	1.2	2.3
Interpretation & Education	4	2	6	1	1.5
Classify Parks by Use	2	1	2	.3	1
New Initiatives	8	4	9	1.5	1.1

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	Number of Suggestion s	% of Total Suggestion s	Score: Number of Points	Weight: % of Total Points	Points Per Suggestion
V. CONSERVE NATURAL RESOURCES	28	14.2	60	10.3	2.1
Acquire Natural Areas	8	4	20	3.4	2.5
Expand Protection	4	2	7	1.2	1.8
Restore Water Resources	2	1	7	1.2	3.5
Appropriate Public Use	5	2.5	12	2.1	2.4
Interpretation & Education	8	4	11	1.9	1.4
Protect from Overuse	1	.5	3	.5	3
TOTALS/AVERAGE	197	100.0	581	100.0	2.95